

AN EXCEPTIONAL PATTERN VARIANT OF THE
CORAL SNAKE, *MICRURUS FULVIUS* (LINNAEUS)

ANNE MEACHEM AND CHARLES W. MYERS
University of Florida

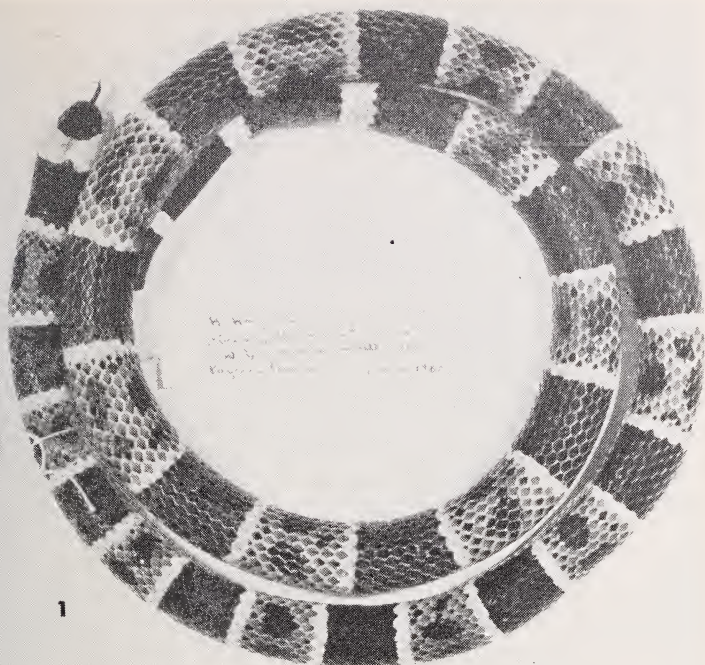
An oddly patterned Coral Snake recently collected near Gainesville, Florida is worthy of description. *Micrurus fulvius* almost invariably bears a pattern of black, red, and yellow rings that completely encircle the body (figs. 1-2). The present specimen (figs. 3-4) is unusual in having fewer black rings than usual, several of which are reduced to dorsal blotches, and a corresponding enlargement of the red areas. Besides the six yellow-bordered black rings that circle the body in a more or less normal manner, there are four dorsal black blotches which tend (in varying degrees) to be encompassed by narrow rings of yellow. The most striking aspect of this individual, consequently, is the extensive unmarked area of the venter, which before preservation was a clear coral red color. The red of the dorsum is the same basic color but is darkened by diffuse black pigment; the absence of conspicuous black spotting on the red is highly aberrant. The tail is normal in being encircled by black and yellow.

The specimen is an adult male; after preservation it measures 812 mm. in total length (100 mm. tail length). Dorsal scale formula 15-15-15, ventrals 212, subcaudals in 42 pairs, supralabials 7-7, infralabials 7-7, temporals 1 + 1. It is now catalogued number 14902 in the University of Florida Collections.

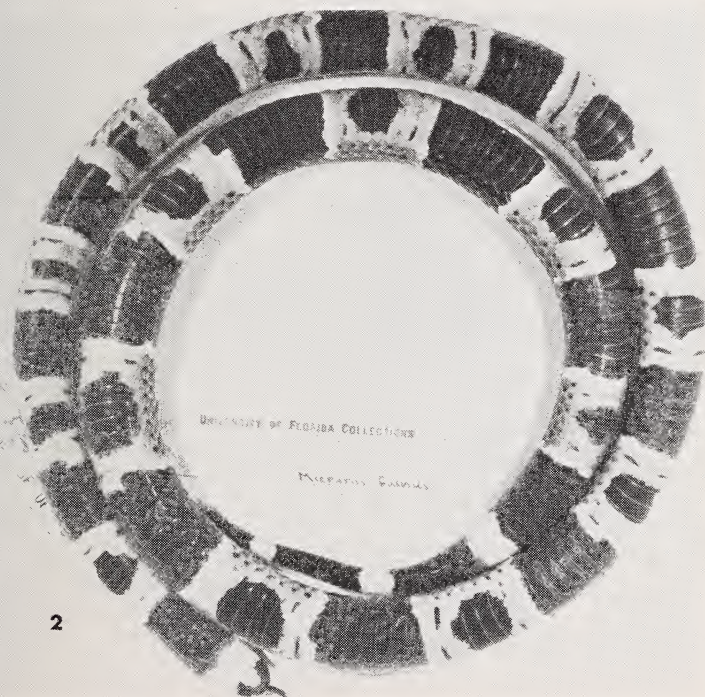
Others have told us of seeing Floridian Coral Snakes which also bore occasional dorsal "saddles," the total pattern being not so radically altered as in the present case however. One is tempted to speculate whether dorsal blotches in these variants might not represent an ancestral condition, since it seems probable that blotched patterns are more primitive than ringed ones in snakes.

Figures 1-2. Dorsal and ventral views of a normally patterned Coral Snake. (UF 14901. North edge of Payne's Prairie, approximately 4½ miles SSW Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida.) Robert McFarlane, Florida State Museum.

Figures 3-4. Dorsal and ventral views of Coral Snake with a highly aberrant pattern. (UF 14902. 4¾ miles WSW Gainesville, near Hogtown Sink, Alachua County, Florida.) Robert McFarlane, Florida State Museum.



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